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## PREFACE

It has ever been seen that men in general have resorted to outward forms for the expression of their religion: sound piety, that is to say, light and virtue, has never been the portion of the many. One should not wonder at this, nothing is so much in accord with human weakness. We are impressed by what is outward, while the inner essence of things requires consideration of such a kind as few persons are fitted to give. As true piety consists in principles and practice, the outward forms of religion imitate these, and are of two kinds: the one kind consists in ceremonial practices, and the other in the formularies of belief. Ceremonies resemble virtuous actions, and formularies are like shadows of the truth and approach, more or less, the true light. All these outward forms would be commendable if those who invented them had rendered them appropriate to maintain and to express that which they imitate—if religious ceremonies, ecclesiastical discipline, the rules of communities, human laws were always like a hedge round the divine law, to withdraw us from any approach to vice, to inure us to the good and to make us familiar with virtue. That was the aim of Moses and of other good lawgivers, of the wise men who founded religious orders, and above all of Jesus Christ, divine founder of the purest and most enlightened religion. It is just the same with the formularies of [50]belief: they would be valid provided there were nothing in them inconsistent with truth unto salvation, even though the full truth concerned were not there. But it happens only too often that religion is choked in ceremonial, and that the divine light is obscured by the opinions of men.

The pagans, who inhabited the earth before Christianity was founded, had only one kind of outward form: they had ceremonies in their worship, but they had no articles of faith and had never dreamed of drawing up formularies for their dogmatic theology. They knew not whether their gods were real persons or symbols of the forces of Nature, as the sun, the planets, the elements. Their mysteries consisted not in difficult dogmas but in certain secret observances, whence the profane, namely those who were not initiated, were excluded. These observances were very often ridiculous and absurd, and it was necessary to conceal them in order to guard them against contempt. The pagans had their superstitions: they boasted of miracles, everything with them was full of oracles, auguries, portents, divinations; the priests invented signs of the anger or of the goodness of the gods, whose interpreters they claimed to be. This tended to sway minds through fear and hope concerning human



events; but the great future of another life was scarce envisaged; one did not trouble to impart to men true notions of God and of the soul.

Of all ancient peoples, it appears that the Hebrews alone had public dogmas for their religion. Abraham and Moses established the belief in one God, source of all good, author of all things. The Hebrews speak of him in a manner worthy of the Supreme Substance; and one wonders at seeing the inhabitants of one small region of the earth more enlightened than the rest of the human race. Peradventure the wise men of other nations have sometimes said the same, but they have not had the good fortune to find a sufficient following and to convert the dogma into law. Nevertheless Moses had not inserted in his laws the doctrine of the immortality of souls: it was consistent with his ideas, it was taught by oral tradition; but it was not proclaimed for popular acceptance until Jesus Christ lifted the veil, and, without having force in his hand, taught with all the force of a lawgiver that immortal souls pass into another life, wherein they shall receive the wages of their deeds. Moses had already expressed the beautiful conceptions of the greatness and the goodness of God, whereto many civilized [51]peoples to-day assent; but Jesus Christ demonstrated fully the results of these ideas, proclaiming that divine goodness and justice are shown forth to perfection in God's designs for the souls of men.

I refrain from considering here the other points of the Christian doctrine, and I will show only how Jesus Christ brought about the conversion of natural religion into law, and gained for it the authority of a public dogma. He alone did that which so many philosophers had endeavoured in vain to do; and Christians having at last gained the upper hand in the Roman Empire, the master of the greater part of the known earth, the religion of the wise men became that of the nations. Later also Mahomet showed no divergence from the great dogmas of natural theology: his followers spread them abroad even among the most remote races of Asia and of Africa, whither Christianity had not been carried; and they abolished in many countries heathen superstitions which were contrary to the true doctrine of the unity of God and the immortality of souls.

It is clear that Jesus Christ, completing what Moses had begun, wished that the Divinity should be the object not only of our fear and veneration but also of our love and devotion. Thus he made men happy by anticipation, and gave them here on earth a foretaste of future felicity. For there is nothing so agreeable as loving that which is worthy of love. Love is that mental state which makes us take pleasure in the perfections of the object of our love, and there is nothing more perfect than God, nor any greater delight than in him. To love him it suffices to contemplate his perfections, a thing easy indeed, because we find the ideas of these within ourselves. The perfections of God are those of our souls, but he possesses them in boundless measure; he is an Ocean, whereof to us only drops have been granted; there is in us some power, some knowledge, some goodness, but in God they are all in their



entirety. Order, proportions, harmony delight us; painting and music are samples of these: God is all order; he always keeps truth of proportions, he makes universal harmony; all beauty is an effusion of his rays.

It follows manifestly that true piety and even true felicity consist in the love of God, but a love so enlightened that its fervour is attended by insight. This kind of love begets that pleasure in good actions which gives relief to virtue, and, relating all to God as to the centre, transports the human to the divine. For in doing [52]one's duty, in obeying reason, one carries out the orders of Supreme Reason. One directs all one's intentions to the common good, which is no other than the glory of God. Thus one finds that there is no greater individual interest than to espouse that of the community, and one gains satisfaction for oneself by taking pleasure in the acquisition of true benefits for men. Whether one succeeds therein or not, one is content with what comes to pass, being once resigned to the will of God and knowing that what he wills is best. But before he declares his will by the event one endeavours to find it out by doing that which appears most in accord with his commands. When we are in this state of mind, we are not disheartened by ill success, we regret only our faults; and the ungrateful ways of men cause no relaxation in the exercise of our kindly disposition. Our charity is humble and full of moderation, it presumes not to domineer; attentive alike to our own faults and to the talents of others, we are inclined to criticize our own actions and to excuse and vindicate those of others. We must work out our own perfection and do wrong to no man. There is no piety where there is not charity; and without being kindly and beneficent one cannot show sincere religion.

Good disposition, favourable upbringing, association with pious and virtuous persons may contribute much towards such a propitious condition for our souls; but most securely are they grounded therein by good principles. I have already said that insight must be joined to fervour, that the perfecting of our understanding must accomplish the perfecting of our will. The practices of virtue, as well as those of vice, may be the effect of a mere habit, one may acquire a taste for them; but when virtue is reasonable, when it is related to God, who is the supreme reason of things, it is founded on knowledge. One cannot love God without knowing his perfections, and this knowledge contains the principles of true piety. The purpose of religion should be to imprint these principles upon our souls: but in some strange way it has happened all too often that men, that teachers of religion have strayed far from this purpose. Contrary to the intention of our divine Master, devotion has been reduced to ceremonies and doctrine has been cumbered with formulae. All too often these ceremonies have not been well fitted to maintain the exercise of virtue, and the formulae sometimes have not been lucid. Can one believe it? Some Christians have imagined that they could be [53]devout without loving their neighbour, and pious without loving God; or else people have thought that they could love their neighbour



without serving him and could love God without knowing him. Many centuries have passed without recognition of this defect by the people at large; and there are still great traces of the reign of darkness. There are divers persons who speak much of piety, of devotion, of religion, who are even busied with the teaching of such things, and who yet prove to be by no means versed in the divine perfections. They ill understand the goodness and the justice of the Sovereign of the universe; they imagine a God who deserves neither to be imitated nor to be loved. This indeed seemed to me dangerous in its effect, since it is of serious moment that the very source of piety should be preserved from infection. The old errors of those who arraigned the Divinity or who made thereof an evil principle have been renewed sometimes in our own days: people have pleaded the irresistible power of God when it was a question rather of presenting his supreme goodness; and they have assumed a despotic power when they should rather have conceived of a power ordered by the most perfect wisdom. I have observed that these opinions, apt to do harm, rested especially on confused notions which had been formed concerning freedom, necessity and destiny; and I have taken up my pen more than once on such an occasion to give explanations on these important matters. But finally I have been compelled to gather up my thoughts on all these connected questions, and to impart them to the public. It is this that I have undertaken in the Essays which I offer here, on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil.

There are two famous labyrinths where our reason very often goes astray: one concerns the great question of the Free and the Necessary, above all in the production and the origin of Evil; the other consists in the discussion of continuity and of the indivisibles which appear to be the elements thereof, and where the consideration of the infinite must enter in. The first perplexes almost all the human race, the other exercises philosophers only. I shall have perchance at another time an opportunity to declare myself on the second, and to point out that, for lack of a true conception of the nature of substance and matter, people have taken up false positions leading to insurmountable difficulties, difficulties which should properly be applied to the overthrow of these very [54]positions. But if the knowledge of continuity is important for speculative enquiry, that of necessity is none the less so for practical application; and it, together with the questions therewith connected, to wit, the freedom of man and the justice of God, forms the object of this treatise.

Men have been perplexed in well-nigh every age by a sophism which the ancients called the 'Lazy Reason', because it tended towards doing nothing, or at least towards being careful for nothing and only following inclination for the pleasure of the moment. For, they said, if the future is necessary, that which must happen will happen, whatever I may do. Now the future (so they said) is necessary, whether because the Divinity foresees everything, and even pre-establishes it by the control of all things in the universe; or because everything happens of necessity, through the



concatenation of causes; or finally, through the very nature of truth, which is determinate in the assertions that can be made on future events, as it is in all assertions, since the assertion must always be true or false in itself, even though we know not always which it is. And all these reasons for determination which appear different converge finally like lines upon one and the same centre; for there is a truth in the future event which is predetermined by the causes, and God pre-establishes it in establishing the causes.

The false conception of necessity, being applied in practice, has given rise to what I call *Fatum Mahometanum*, fate after the Turkish fashion, because it is said of the Turks that they do not shun danger or even abandon places infected with plague, owing to their use of such reasoning as that just recorded. For what is called *Fatum Stoicum* was not so black as it is painted: it did not divert men from the care of their affairs, but it tended to give them tranquillity in regard to events, through the consideration of necessity, which renders our anxieties and our vexations needless. In which respect these philosophers were not far removed from the teaching of our Lord, who deprecates these anxieties in regard to the morrow, comparing them with the needless trouble a man would give himself in labouring to increase his stature.

It is true that the teachings of the Stoics (and perhaps also of some famous philosophers of our time), confining themselves to this alleged necessity, can only impart a forced patience; whereas our Lord inspires thoughts more sublime, and even instructs us in the means of gaining contentment by assuring us that since God, [55]being altogether good and wise, has care for everything, even so far as not to neglect one hair of our head, our confidence in him ought to be entire. And thus we should see, if we were capable of understanding him, that it is not even possible to wish for anything better (as much in general as for ourselves) than what he does. It is as if one said to men: Do your duty and be content with that which shall come of it, not only because you cannot resist divine providence, or the nature of things (which may suffice for tranquillity, but not for contentment), but also because you have to do with a good master. And that is what may be called *Fatum Christianum*.

Nevertheless it happens that most men, and even Christians, introduce into their dealings some mixture of fate after the Turkish fashion, although they do not sufficiently acknowledge it. It is true that they are not inactive or negligent when obvious perils or great and manifest hopes present themselves; for they will not fail to abandon a house that is about to fall and to turn aside from a precipice they see in their path; and they will burrow in the earth to dig up a treasure half uncovered, without waiting for fate to finish dislodging it. But when the good or the evil is remote and uncertain and the remedy painful or little to our taste, the lazy reason seems to us to be valid. For example, when it is a question of preserving one's health and even one's life by good diet, people to whom one gives advice thereupon very often answer that our days are numbered and that it avails nothing to try to struggle



against that which God destines for us. But these same persons run to even the most absurd remedies when the evil they had neglected draws near. One reasons in somewhat the same way when the question for consideration is somewhat thorny, as for instance when one asks oneself, *quod vitae sectabor iter?* what profession one must choose; when it is a question of a marriage being arranged, of a war being undertaken, of a battle being fought; for in these cases many will be inclined to evade the difficulty of consideration and abandon themselves to fate or to inclination, as if reason should not be employed except in easy cases. One will then all too often reason in the Turkish fashion (although this way is wrongly termed trusting in providence, a thing that in reality occurs only when one has done one's duty) and one will employ the lazy reason, derived from the idea of inevitable fate, to relieve oneself of the need to reason properly. [56] One will thus overlook the fact that if this argument contrary to the practice of reason were valid, it would always hold good, whether the consideration were easy or not. This laziness is to some extent the source of the superstitious practices of fortune-tellers, which meet with just such credulity as men show towards the philosopher's stone, because they would fain have short cuts to the attainment of happiness without trouble.

I do not speak here of those who throw themselves upon fortune because they have been happy before, as if there were something permanent therein. Their argument from the past to the future has just as slight a foundation as the principles of astrology and of other kinds of divination. They overlook the fact that there is usually an ebb and flow in fortune, *una marea*, as Italians playing basset are wont to call it. With regard to this they make their own particular observations, which I would, nevertheless, counsel none to trust too much. Yet this confidence that people have in their fortune serves often to give courage to men, and above all to soldiers, and causes them to have indeed that good fortune they ascribe to themselves. Even so do predictions often cause that to happen which has been foretold, as it is supposed that the opinion the Mahometans hold on fate makes them resolute. Thus even errors have their use at times, but generally as providing a remedy for other errors: and truth is unquestionably better.

But it is taking an unfair advantage of this alleged necessity of fate to employ it in excuse for our vices and our libertinism. I have often heard it said by smart young persons, who wished to play the freethinker, that it is useless to preach virtue, to censure vice, to create hopes of reward and fears of punishment, since it may be said of the book of destiny, that what is written is written, and that our behaviour can change nothing therein. Thus, they would say, it were best to follow one's inclination, dwelling only upon such things as may content us in the present. They did not reflect upon the strange consequences of this argument, which would prove too much, since it would prove (for instance) that one should take a pleasant beverage even though one knows it is poisoned. For the same reason (if it were valid) I could say: if it is



written in the records of the Parcae that poison will kill me now or will do me harm, this will happen even though I were not to take this beverage; and if this is not written, it will not happen even though I should take this same beverage; consequently I shall be [57]able to follow with impunity my inclination to take what is pleasing, however injurious it may be; the result of which reasoning is an obvious absurdity. This objection disconcerted them a little, but they always reverted to their argument, phrased in different ways, until they were brought to understand where the fault of the sophism lies. It is untrue that the event happens whatever one may do: it will happen because one does what leads thereto; and if the event is written beforehand, the cause that will make it happen is written also. Thus the connexion of effects and causes, so far from establishing the doctrine of a necessity detrimental to conduct, serves to overthrow it.

Yet, without having evil intentions inclined towards libertinism, one may envisage differently the strange consequences of an inevitable necessity, considering that it would destroy the freedom of the will, so essential to the morality of action: for justice and injustice, praise and blame, punishment and reward cannot attach to necessary actions, and nobody will be under obligation to do the impossible or to abstain from doing what is absolutely necessary. Without any intention of abusing this consideration in order to favour irregularity, one will nevertheless not escape embarrassment sometimes, when it comes to a question of judging the actions of others, or rather of answering objections, amongst which there are some even concerned with the actions of God, whereof I will speak presently. And as an insuperable necessity would open the door to impiety, whether through the impunity one could thence infer or the hopelessness of any attempt to resist a torrent that sweeps everything along with it, it is important to note the different degrees of necessity, and to show that there are some which cannot do harm, as there are others which cannot be admitted without giving rise to evil consequences.

Some go even further: not content with using the pretext of necessity to prove that virtue and vice do neither good nor ill, they have the hardihood to make the Divinity accessory to their licentious way of life, and they imitate the pagans of old, who ascribed to the gods the cause of their crimes, as if a divinity drove them to do evil. The philosophy of Christians, which recognizes better than that of the ancients the dependence of things upon the first Author and his co-operation with all the actions of creatures, appears to have increased this difficulty. Some able men in our own time have gone so far as to deny all [58]action to creatures, and M. Bayle, who tended a little towards this extraordinary opinion, made use of it to restore the lapsed dogma of the two principles, or two gods, the one good, the other evil, as if this dogma were a better solution to the difficulties over the origin of evil. Yet again he acknowledges that it is an indefensible opinion and that the oneness of the Principle is incontestably founded on *a priori* reasons; but he wishes to infer that our Reason is confounded and



cannot meet her own objections, and that one should disregard them and hold fast the revealed dogmas, which teach us the existence of one God altogether good, altogether powerful and altogether wise. But many readers, convinced of the irrefutable nature of his objections and believing them to be at least as strong as the proofs for the truth of religion, would draw dangerous conclusions.

Even though there were no co-operation by God in evil actions, one could not help finding difficulty in the fact that he foresees them and that, being able to prevent them through his omnipotence, he yet permits them. This is why some philosophers and even some theologians have rather chosen to deny to God any knowledge of the detail of things and, above all, of future events, than to admit what they believed repellent to his goodness. The Socinians and Conrad Vorstius lean towards that side; and Thomas Bonartes, an English Jesuit disguised under a pseudonym but exceedingly learned, who wrote a book *De Concordia Scientiae cum Fide*, of which I will speak later, appears to hint at this also.

They are doubtless much mistaken; but others are not less so who, convinced that nothing comes to pass save by the will and the power of God, ascribe to him intentions and actions so unworthy of the greatest and the best of all beings that one would say these authors have indeed renounced the dogma which recognizes God's justice and goodness. They thought that, being supreme Master of the universe, he could without any detriment to his holiness cause sins to be committed, simply at his will and pleasure, or in order that he might have the pleasure of punishing; and even that he could take pleasure in eternally afflicting innocent people without doing any injustice, because no one has the right or the power to control his actions. Some even have gone so far as to say that God acts thus indeed; and on the plea that we are as nothing in comparison with him, they liken us to earthworms which men crush without heeding as they walk, or in general to [59]animals that are not of our species and which we do not scruple to ill-treat.

I believe that many persons otherwise of good intentions are misled by these ideas, because they have not sufficient knowledge of their consequences. They do not see that, properly speaking, God's justice is thus overthrown. For what idea shall we form of such a justice as has only will for its rule, that is to say, where the will is not guided by the rules of good and even tends directly towards evil? Unless it be the idea contained in that tyrannical definition by Thrasymachus in Plato, which designated as *just* that which pleases the stronger. Such indeed is the position taken up, albeit unwittingly, by those who rest all obligation upon constraint, and in consequence take power as the gauge of right. But one will soon abandon maxims so strange and so unfit to make men good and charitable through the imitation of God. For one will reflect that a God who would take pleasure in the misfortune of others cannot be distinguished from the evil principle of the Manichaeans, assuming that this principle had become sole master of the universe; and that in consequence one



must attribute to the true God sentiments that render him worthy to be called the good Principle.

Happily these extravagant dogmas scarce obtain any longer among theologians. Nevertheless some astute persons, who are pleased to make difficulties, revive them: they seek to increase our perplexity by uniting the controversies aroused by Christian theology to the disputes of philosophy. Philosophers have considered the questions of necessity, of freedom and of the origin of evil; theologians have added thereto those of original sin, of grace and of predestination. The original corruption of the human race, coming from the first sin, appears to us to have imposed a natural necessity to sin without the succour of divine grace: but necessity being incompatible with punishment, it will be inferred that a sufficient grace ought to have been given to all men; which does not seem to be in conformity with experience.

But the difficulty is great, above all, in relation to God's dispositions for the salvation of men. There are few saved or chosen; therefore the choice of many is not God's decreed will. And since it is admitted that those whom he has chosen deserve it no more than the rest, and are not even fundamentally less evil, the goodness which they have coming only from the gift of God, the difficulty [60] is increased. Where is, then, his justice (people will say), or at the least, where is his goodness? Partiality, or respect of persons, goes against justice, and he who without cause sets bounds to his goodness cannot have it in sufficient measure. It is true that those who are not chosen are lost by their own fault: they lack good will or living faith; but it rested with God alone to grant it them. We know that besides inward grace there are usually outward circumstances which distinguish men, and that training, conversation, example often correct or corrupt natural disposition. Now that God should call forth circumstances favourable to some and abandon others to experiences which contribute to their misfortune, will not that give us cause for astonishment? And it is not enough (so it seems) to say with some that inward grace is universal and equal for all. For these same authors are obliged to resort to the exclamations of St. Paul, and to say: 'O the depth!' when they consider how men are distinguished by what we may call outward graces, that is, by graces appearing in the diversity of circumstances which God calls forth, whereof men are not the masters, and which have nevertheless so great an influence upon all that concerns their salvation.

Nor will it help us to say with St. Augustine that, all men being involved in the damnation caused by the sin of Adam, God might have left them all in their misery; and that thus his goodness alone induces him to deliver some of them. For not only is it strange that the sin of another should condemn anyone, but there still remains the question why God does not deliver all — why he delivers the lesser number and why some in preference to others. He is in truth their master, but he is a good and just master; his power is absolute, but his wisdom permits not that he exercise that power in an arbitrary and despotic way, which would be tyrannous indeed.



Moreover, the fall of the first man having happened only with God's permission, and God having resolved to permit it only when once he had considered its consequences, which are the corruption of the mass of the human race and the choice of a small number of elect, with the abandonment of all the rest, it is useless to conceal the difficulty by limiting one's view to the mass already corrupt. One must, in spite of oneself, go back to the knowledge of the consequences of the first sin, preceding the decree whereby God permitted it, and whereby he permitted simultaneously that [61]the damned should be involved in the mass of perdition and should not be delivered: for God and the sage make no resolve without considering its consequences.

I hope to remove all these difficulties. I will point out that absolute necessity, which is called also logical and metaphysical and sometimes geometrical, and which would alone be formidable in this connexion, does not exist in free actions, and that thus freedom is exempt not only from constraint but also from real necessity. I will show that God himself, although he always chooses the best, does not act by an absolute necessity, and that the laws of nature laid down by God, founded upon the fitness of things, keep the mean between geometrical truths, absolutely necessary, and arbitrary decrees; which M. Bayle and other modern philosophers have not sufficiently understood. Further I will show that there is an indifference in freedom, because there is no absolute necessity for one course or the other; but yet that there is never an indifference of perfect equipoise. And I will demonstrate that there is in free actions a perfect spontaneity beyond all that has been conceived hitherto. Finally I will make it plain that the hypothetical and the moral necessity which subsist in free actions are open to no objection, and that the 'Lazy Reason' is a pure sophism.

Likewise concerning the origin of evil in its relation to God, I offer a vindication of his perfections that shall extol not less his holiness, his justice and his goodness than his greatness, his power and his independence. I show how it is possible for everything to depend upon God, for him to co-operate in all the actions of creatures, even, if you will, to create these creatures continually, and nevertheless not to be the author of sin. Here also it is demonstrated how the privative nature of evil should be understood. Much more than that, I explain how evil has a source other than the will of God, and that one is right therefore to say of moral evil that God wills it not, but simply permits it. Most important of all, however, I show that it has been possible for God to permit sin and misery, and even to co-operate therein and promote it, without detriment to his holiness and his supreme goodness: although, generally speaking, he could have avoided all these evils.

Concerning grace and predestination, I justify the most debatable assertions, as for instance: that we are converted only [62]through the prevenient grace of God and that we cannot do good except with his aid; that God wills the salvation of all men and that he condemns only those whose will is evil; that he gives to all a sufficient grace



provided they wish to use it; that, Jesus Christ being the source and the centre of election, God destined the elect for salvation, because he foresaw that they would cling with a lively faith to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. Yet it is true that this reason for election is not the final reason, and that this very pre-vision is still a consequence of God's anterior decree. Faith likewise is a gift of God, who has predestinated the faith of the elect, for reasons lying in a superior decree which dispenses grace and circumstance in accordance with God's supreme wisdom.

Now, as one of the most gifted men of our time, whose eloquence was as great as his acumen and who gave great proofs of his vast erudition, had applied himself with a strange predilection to call attention to all the difficulties on this subject which I have just touched in general, I found a fine field for exercise in considering the question with him in detail. I acknowledge that M. Bayle (for it is easy to see that I speak of him) has on his side all the advantages except that of the root of the matter, but I hope that truth (which he acknowledges himself to be on our side) by its very plainness, and provided it be fittingly set forth, will prevail over all the ornaments of eloquence and erudition. My hope for success therein is all the greater because it is the cause of God I plead, and because one of the maxims here upheld states that God's help is never lacking for those that lack not good will. The author of this discourse believes that he has given proof of this good will in the attention he has brought to bear upon this subject. He has meditated upon it since his youth; he has conferred with some of the foremost men of the time; and he has schooled himself by the reading of good authors. And the success which God has given him (according to the opinion of sundry competent judges) in certain other profound meditations, of which some have much influence on this subject, gives him peradventure some right to claim the attention of readers who love truth and are fitted to search after it.

The author had, moreover, particular and weighty reasons inducing him to take pen in hand for discussion of this subject. Conversations which he had concerning the same with literary and court personages, in Germany and in France, and especially [63] with one of the greatest and most accomplished of princesses, have repeatedly prompted him to this course. He had had the honour of expressing his opinions to this Princess upon divers passages of the admirable *Dictionary* of M. Bayle, wherein religion and reason appear as adversaries, and where M. Bayle wishes to silence reason after having made it speak too loud: which he calls the triumph of faith. The present author declared there and then that he was of a different opinion, but that he was nevertheless well pleased that a man of such great genius had brought about an occasion for going deeply into these subjects, subjects as important as they are difficult. He admitted having examined them also for some long time already, and having sometimes been minded to publish upon this matter some reflexions whose chief aim should be such knowledge of God as is needed to awaken piety and to foster virtue. This Princess exhorted and urged him to carry out his long-



cherished intention, and some friends added their persuasions. He was all the more tempted to accede to their requests since he had reason to hope that in the sequel to his investigation M. Bayle's genius would greatly aid him to give the subject such illumination as it might receive with his support. But divers obstacles intervened, and the death of the incomparable Queen was not the least. It happened, however, that M. Bayle was attacked by excellent men who set themselves to examine the same subject; he answered them fully and always ingeniously. I followed their dispute, and was even on the point of being involved therein. This is how it came about.

I had published a new system, which seemed well adapted to explain the union of the soul and the body: it met with considerable applause even from those who were not in agreement with it, and certain competent persons testified that they had already been of my opinion, without having reached so distinct an explanation, before they saw what I had written on the matter. M. Bayle examined it in his *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, article 'Rorarius'. He thought that my expositions were worthy of further development; he drew attention to their usefulness in various connexions, and he laid stress upon what might still cause difficulty. I could not but reply in a suitable way to expressions so civil and to reflexions so instructive as his. In order to turn them to greater account, I published some elucidations in the *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savants*, July 1698. M. Bayle replied to them in the [64]second edition of his *Dictionary*. I sent him a rejoinder which has not yet been published; I know not whether he ever made a further reply.

Meanwhile it happened that M. le Clerc had inserted in his *Select Library* an extract from the *Intellectual System* of the late Mr. Cudworth, and had explained therein certain 'plastic natures' which this admirable author applied to the formation of animals. M. Bayle believed (see the continuation of *Divers Thoughts on the Comet*, ch. 21, art. 11) that, these natures being without cognition, in establishing them one weakened the argument which proves, through the marvellous formation of things, that the universe must have an intelligent Cause. M. le Clerc replied (4th art. of the 5th vol. of his *Select Library*) that these natures required to be directed by divine wisdom. M. Bayle insisted (7th article of the *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savants*, August 1704) that direction alone was not sufficient for a cause devoid of cognition, unless one took the cause to be a mere instrument of God, in which case direction would be needless. My system was touched upon in passing; and that gave me an opportunity to send a short essay to the illustrious author of the *Histoire des Ouvrages des Savants*, which he inserted in the month of May 1705, art. 9. In this I endeavoured to make clear that in reality mechanism is sufficient to produce the organic bodies of animals, without any need of other plastic natures, provided there be added thereto the *preformation* already completely organic in the seeds of the bodies that come into existence, contained in those of the bodies whence they spring, right back to the primary seeds. This could only proceed from the Author of things, infinitely



powerful and infinitely wise, who, creating all in the beginning in due order, had *pre-established* there all order and artifice that was to be. There is no chaos in the inward nature of things, and there is organism everywhere in a matter whose disposition proceeds from God. More and more of it would come to light if we pressed closer our examination of the anatomy of bodies; and we should continue to observe it even if we could go on to infinity, like Nature, and make subdivision as continuous in our knowledge as Nature has made it in fact.

In order to explain this marvel of the formation of animals, I made use of a Pre-established Harmony, that is to say, of the same means I had used to explain another marvel, namely the [65]correspondence of soul with body, wherein I proved the uniformity and the fecundity of the principles I had employed. It seems that this reminded M. Bayle of my system of accounting for this correspondence, which he had examined formerly. He declared (in chapter 180 of his *Reply to the Questions of a Provincial*, vol. III, p. 1253) that he did not believe God could give to matter or to any other cause the faculty of becoming organic without communicating to it the idea and the knowledge of organic nature. Also he was not yet disposed to believe that God, with all his power over Nature and with all the foreknowledge which he has of the contingencies that may arrive, could have so disposed things that by the laws of mechanics alone a vessel (for instance) should go to its port of destination without being steered during its passage by some intelligent guide. I was surprised to see that limits were placed on the power of God, without the adduction of any proof and without indication that there was any contradiction to be feared on the side of the object or any imperfection on God's side. Whereas I had shown before in my Rejoinder that even men often produce through automata something like the movements that come from reason, and that even a finite mind (but one far above ours) could accomplish what M. Bayle thinks impossible to the Divinity. Moreover, as God orders all things at once beforehand, the accuracy of the path of this vessel would be no more strange than that of a fuse passing along a cord in fireworks, since the whole disposition of things preserves a perfect harmony between them by means of their influence one upon the other.

This declaration of M. Bayle pledged me to an answer. I therefore purposed to point out to him, that unless it be said that God forms organic bodies himself by a perpetual miracle, or that he has entrusted this care to intelligences whose power and knowledge are almost divine, we must hold the opinion that God *preformed* things in such sort that new organisms are only a mechanical consequence of a preceding organic constitution. Even so do butterflies come out of silkworms, an instance where M. Swammerdam has shown that there is nothing but development. And I would have added that nothing is better qualified than the preformation of plants and of animals to confirm my System of Pre-established Harmony between the soul and the body. For in this the body is prompted by its original constitution to carry out with



the help of external things all that it does in accordance with the [66]will of the soul. So the seeds by their original constitution carry out naturally the intentions of God, by an artifice greater still than that which causes our body to perform everything in conformity with our will. And since M. Bayle himself deems with reason that there is more artifice in the organism of animals than in the most beautiful poem in the world or in the most admirable invention whereof the human mind is capable, it follows that my system of the connexion between the body and the soul is as intelligible as the general opinion on the formation of animals. For this opinion (which appears to me true) states in effect that the wisdom of God has so made Nature that it is competent in virtue of its laws to form animals; I explain this opinion and throw more light upon the possibility of it through the system of preformation. Whereafter there will be no cause for surprise that God has so made the body that by virtue of its own laws it can carry out the intentions of the reasoning soul: for all that the reasoning soul can demand of the body is less difficult than the organization which God has demanded of the seeds. M. Bayle says (*Reply to the Questions of a Provincial*, ch. 182, p. 1294) that it is only very recently there have been people who have understood that the formation of living bodies cannot be a natural process. This he could say also (in accordance with his principles) of the communication between the soul and the body, since God effects this whole communication in the system of occasional causes to which this author subscribes. But I admit the supernatural here only in the beginning of things, in respect of the first formation of animals or in respect of the original constitution of pre-established harmony between the soul and the body. Once that has come to pass, I hold that the formation of animals and the relation between the soul and the body are something as natural now as the other most ordinary operations of Nature. A close parallel is afforded by people's ordinary thinking about the instinct and the marvellous behaviour of brutes. One recognizes reason there not in the brutes but in him who created them. I am, then, of the general opinion in this respect; but I hope that my explanation will have added clearness and lucidity, and even a more ample range, to that opinion.

Now when preparing to justify my system in face of the new difficulties of M. Bayle, I purposed at the same time to communicate to him the ideas which I had had for some time already, on [67]the difficulties put forward by him in opposition to those who endeavour to reconcile reason with faith in regard to the existence of evil. Indeed, there are perhaps few persons who have toiled more than I in this matter. Hardly had I gained some tolerable understanding of Latin writings when I had an opportunity of turning over books in a library. I flitted from book to book, and since subjects for meditation pleased me as much as histories and fables, I was charmed by the work of Laurentius Valla against Boethius and by that of Luther against Erasmus, although I was well aware that they had need of some mitigation. I did not omit books of controversy, and amongst other writings of this nature the records of the Montbéliard



Conversation, which had revived the dispute, appeared to me instructive. Nor did I neglect the teachings of our theologians: and the study of their opponents, far from disturbing me, served to strengthen me in the moderate opinions of the Churches of the Augsburg Confession. I had opportunity on my journeys to confer with some excellent men of different parties, for instance with Bishop Peter von Wallenburg, Suffragan of Mainz, with Herr Johann Ludwig Fabricius, premier theologian of Heidelberg, and finally with the celebrated M. Arnauld. To him I even tendered a Latin Dialogue of my own composition upon this subject, about the year 1673, wherein already I laid it down that God, having chosen the most perfect of all possible worlds, had been prompted by his wisdom to permit the evil which was bound up with it, but which still did not prevent this world from being, all things considered, the best that could be chosen. I have also since read many and various good authors on these subjects, and I have endeavoured to make progress in the knowledge that seems to me proper for banishing all that could have obscured the idea of supreme perfection which must be acknowledged in God. I have not neglected to examine the most rigorous authors, who have extended furthest the doctrine of the necessity of things, as for instance Hobbes and Spinoza, of whom the former advocated this absolute necessity not only in his *Physical Elements* and elsewhere, but also in a special book against Bishop Bramhall. And Spinoza insists more or less (like an ancient Peripatetic philosopher named Strato) that all has come from the first cause or from primitive Nature by a blind and geometrical necessity, with complete absence of capacity for choice, for goodness and for understanding in this first source of things.

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I have found the means, so it seems to me, of demonstrating the contrary in a way that gives one a clear insight into the inward essence of the matter. For having made new discoveries on the nature of active force and the laws of motion, I have shown that they have no geometrical necessity, as Spinoza appears to have believed they had. Neither, as I have made plain, are they purely arbitrary, even though this be the opinion of M. Bayle and of some modern philosophers: but they are dependent upon the fitness of things as I have already pointed out above, or upon that which I call the 'principle of the best'. Moreover one recognizes therein, as in every other thing, the marks of the first substance, whose productions bear the stamp of a supreme wisdom and make the most perfect of harmonies. I have shown also that this harmony connects both the future with the past and the present with the absent. The first kind of connexion unites times, and the other places. This second connexion is displayed in the union of the soul with the body, and in general in the communication of true substances with one another and with material phenomena. But the first takes place in the preformation of organic bodies, or rather of all bodies, since there is organism everywhere, although all masses do not compose organic bodies. So a pond may very



well be full of fish or of other organic bodies, although it is not itself an animal or organic body, but only a mass that contains them. Thus I had endeavoured to build upon such foundations, established in a conclusive manner, a complete body of the main articles of knowledge that reason pure and simple can impart to us, a body whereof all the parts were properly connected and capable of meeting the most important difficulties of the ancients and the moderns. I had also in consequence formed for myself a certain system concerning the freedom of man and the cooperation of God. This system appeared to me to be such as would in no wise offend reason and faith; and I desired to submit it to the scrutiny of M. Bayle, as well as of those who are in controversy with him. Now he has departed from us, and such a loss is no small one, a writer whose learning and acumen few have equalled. But since the subject is under consideration and men of talent are still occupied with it, while the public also follows it attentively, I take this to be a fitting moment for the publication of certain of my ideas.

It will perhaps be well to add the observation, before finishing this preface, that in denying the physical influence of the soul upon [69]the body or of the body upon the soul, that is, an influence causing the one to disturb the laws of the other, I by no means deny the union of the one with the other which forms of them a suppositum; but this union is something metaphysical, which changes nothing in the phenomena. This is what I have already said in reply to the objection raised against me, in the *Mémoires de Trévoux*, by the Reverend Father de Tournemine, whose wit and learning are of no ordinary mould. And for this reason one may say also in a metaphysical sense that the soul acts upon the body and the body upon the soul. Moreover, it is true that the soul is the Entelechy or the active principle, whereas the corporeal alone or the mere material contains only the passive. Consequently the principle of action is in the soul, as I have explained more than once in the *Leipzig Journal*. More especially does this appear in my answer to the late Herr Sturm, philosopher and mathematician of Altorf, where I have even demonstrated that, if bodies contained only the passive, their different conditions would be indistinguishable. Also I take this opportunity to say that, having heard of some objections made by the gifted author of the book on *Self-knowledge*, in that same book, to my System of Pre-established Harmony, I sent a reply to Paris, showing that he has attributed to me opinions I am far from holding. On another matter recently I met with like treatment at the hands of an anonymous Doctor of the Sorbonne. And these misconceptions would have become plain to the reader at the outset if my own words, which were being taken in evidence, had been quoted.

This tendency of men to make mistakes in presenting the opinions of others leads me to observe also, that when I said somewhere that man helps himself in conversion through the succour of grace, I mean only that he derives advantage from it through the cessation of the resistance overcome, but without any cooperation on his part: just



as there is no co-operation in ice when it is broken. For conversion is purely the work of God's grace, wherein man co-operates only by resisting it; but human resistance is more or less great according to the persons and the occasions. Circumstances also contribute more or less to our attention and to the motions that arise in the soul; and the co-operation of all these things, together with the strength of the impression and the condition of the will, determines the operation of grace, although not rendering it necessary. I have expounded sufficiently elsewhere [70] that in relation to matters of salvation unregenerate man is to be considered as dead; and I greatly approve the manner wherein the theologians of the Augsburg Confession declare themselves on this subject. Yet this corruption of unregenerate man is, it must be added, no hindrance to his possession of true moral virtues and his performance of good actions in his civic life, actions which spring from a good principle, without any evil intention and without mixture of actual sin. Wherein I hope I shall be forgiven, if I have dared to diverge from the opinion of St. Augustine: he was doubtless a great man, of admirable intelligence, but inclined sometimes, as it seems, to exaggerate things, above all in the heat of his controversies. I greatly esteem some persons who profess to be disciples of St. Augustine, amongst others the Reverend Father Quênel, a worthy successor of the great Arnauld in the pursuit of controversies that have embroiled them with the most famous of Societies. But I have found that usually in disputes between people of conspicuous merit (of whom there are doubtless some here in both parties) there is right on both sides, although in different points, and it is rather in the matter of defence than attack, although the natural malevolence of the human heart generally renders attack more agreeable to the reader than defence. I hope that the Reverend Father Ptolemei, who does his Society credit and is occupied in filling the gaps left by the famous Bellarmine, will give us, concerning all of that, some explanations worthy of his acumen and his knowledge, and I even dare to add, his moderation. And one must believe that among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession there will arise some new Chemnitz or some new Callixtus; even as one is justified in thinking that men like Usserius or Daillé will again appear among the Reformed, and that all will work more and more to remove the misconceptions wherewith this matter is charged. For the rest I shall be well pleased that those who shall wish to examine it closely read the objections with the answers I have given thereto, formulated in the small treatise I have placed at the end of the work by way of summary. I have endeavoured to forestall some new objections. I have explained, for instance, why I have taken the antecedent and consequent will as preliminary and final, after the example of Thomas, of Scotus and others; how it is possible that there be incomparably more good in the glory of all the saved than there is evil in the misery of all the damned, [71] despite that there are more of the latter; how, in saying that evil has been permitted as a *conditio sine qua non* of good, I mean not according to the principle of necessity, but according to the principle of the fitness of things.



Furthermore I show that the predetermination I admit is such as always to predispose, but never to necessitate, and that God will not refuse the requisite new light to those who have made a good use of that which they had. Other elucidations besides I have endeavoured to give on some difficulties which have been put before me of late. I have, moreover, followed the advice of some friends who thought it fitting that I should add two appendices: the one treats of the controversy carried on between Mr. Hobbes and Bishop Bramhall touching Freedom and Necessity, the other of the learned work on *The Origin of Evil*, published a short time ago in England. Finally I have endeavoured in all things to consider edification: and if I have conceded something to curiosity, it is because I thought it necessary to relieve a subject whose seriousness may cause discouragement. It is with that in view that I have introduced into this dissertation the pleasing chimera of a certain astronomical theology, having no ground for apprehension that it will ensnare anyone and deeming that to tell it and refute it is the same thing. Fiction for fiction, instead of imagining that the planets were suns, one might conceive that they were masses melted in the sun and thrown out, and that would destroy the foundation of this hypothetical theology. The ancient error of the two principles, which the Orientals distinguished by the names Oromasdes and Arimanius, caused me to explain a conjecture on the primitive history of peoples. It appears indeed probable that these were the names of two great contemporary princes, the one monarch of a part of upper Asia, where there have since been others of this name, the other king of the Scythian Celts who made incursions into the states of the former, and who was also named amongst the divinities of Germania. It seems, indeed, that Zoroaster used the names of these princes as symbols of the invisible powers which their exploits made them resemble in the ideas of Asiatics. Yet elsewhere, according to the accounts of Arab authors, who in this might well be better informed than the Greeks, it appears from detailed records of ancient oriental history, that this Zerdust or Zoroaster, whom they make contemporary with the great Darius, did not look upon these two [72]principles as completely primitive and independent, but as dependent upon one supreme and single principle. They relate that he believed, in conformity with the cosmogony of Moses, that God, who is without an equal, created all and separated the light from the darkness; that the light conformed with his original design, but that the darkness came as a consequence, even as the shadow follows the body, and that this is nothing but privation. Such a thesis would clear this ancient author of the errors the Greeks imputed to him. His great learning caused the Orientals to compare him with the Mercury or Hermes of the Egyptians and Greeks; just as the northern peoples compared their Wodan or Odin to this same Mercury. That is why Mercredi (Wednesday), or the day of Mercury, was called Wodansdag by the northern peoples, but day of Zerdust by the Asiatics, since it is named Zarschamba or Dsearschambe by the Turks and the Persians, Zerda by the Hungarians from the north-east, and Sreda



by the Slavs from the heart of Great Russia, as far as the Wends of the Luneburg region, the Slavs having learnt the name also from the Orientals. These observations will perhaps not be displeasing to the curious. And I flatter myself that the small dialogue ending the Essays written to oppose M. Bayle will give some satisfaction to those who are well pleased to see difficult but important truths set forth in an easy and familiar way. I have written in a foreign language at the risk of making many errors in it, because that language has been recently used by others in treating of my subject, and because it is more generally read by those whom one would wish to benefit by this small work. It is to be hoped that the language errors will be pardoned: they are to be attributed not only to the printer and the copyist, but also to the haste of the author, who has been much distracted from his task. If, moreover, any error has crept into the ideas expressed, the author will be the first to correct it, once he has been better informed: he has given elsewhere such indications of his love of truth that he hopes this declaration will not be regarded as merely an empty phrase.

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